

12. Non-Governmental Organizations

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The Specialty Session for representatives of non-governmental organizations represented at the Global Forum met at the Department of State. A list of non-governmental organizations that were represented at the Global Forum is a part of the List of Participants in section 19 below. Additional materials provided by several of the non-governmental organizations may be found in the Appendix. At the Session, the Moderator distributed to those present copies of the United States Government International Strategy Against Corruption, the text of which may be found in the Appendix.

The purpose of this session was to initiate a dialogue between government and non-governmental organizations on the issues of corruption and the rule of law, and to discuss how governments and non-governmental organizations can work together on these issues.

Participants found that as representatives of civil society, non-governmental organizations are integral participants in the fight against corruption. There is a wide range of non-governmental organizations with an interest in anticorruption efforts. Some work directly on the issue of corruption, others are human rights organizations, business and professional associations, and academic organizations. These groups need to work together and with governments to strengthen anticorruption policies and legislation, educate the public, and help shape and inform debate within countries and internationally.

In many cases, non-governmental organizations have been fighting corruption longer than governments or businesses. It is clear that at this Forum, the non-governmental organization presence was not fully exploited. As governments create strategies for combating corruption, they must seek to incorporate the views and experiences of non-governmental organizations from the beginning. Non-governmental organizations can and do play many roles in fighting corruption. They broaden public interest and bring together interested parties and experts with government officials to discuss particular issues. They help governments design legislation and programs to implement domestic strategies and international conventions. They help make government and society more transparent and accountable, and create an environment in which fraud and corruption cannot thrive.

Participants suggested a number of concrete ways in which governments and non-governmental organizations can work together to fight corruption. They

can work together to make information about governments more accessible to the public. Non-governmental organizations play a key role in collecting and disseminating information on what legislation exists, and how it is being implemented; on responsible government officials; and on issues that need to be addressed. Government and non-governmental organizations can work together to promote, create and implement independent audit organizations, whistleblower laws, and other mechanisms designed to hold government institutions accountable. They can work to create government and business standards, which both serve as a measure of an organization's commitment to fighting corruption and help create a process within organizations for addressing corruption and ethics issues. They can work together internationally to share and compare experiences on what strategies have been effective in fighting corruption and promoting the rule of law. In exchanging information, non-governmental organizations and governments will be able to increase and improve ideas for addressing specific problems.

11.2 Supporting the efforts of ... non-governmental organizations to promote public integrity and prevent corruption.

Non-governmental organization participants highlighted an important warning as the Forum closed. To talk about the issue of corruption, to admit shortcomings and to confess that governments and societies struggle with corruption is a good first step. However, if this step is not followed with concrete action, it will only serve to increase public cynicism, and to undermine the rule of law that governments seek to promote.